

LACDMH CCC HOLDS FIRST PANEL PRESENTATION AT CAL ENDOWMENT

By Karen Zarsadias-Ige, LACDMH Public Information Officer



On Tuesday, September 24, 2013, the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health (LACDMH) Cultural Competency Committee (CCC) held its first panel presentation, “Rites of Passage in Childhood and Adolescence”, at the California Endowment Center in downtown Los Angeles.

The presentation was meant to foster awareness and sensitivity to the cultural experiences of the diverse communities served by LACDMH. Mental health professionals, resources providers, consumers and the community were invited to attend.

LACDMH Deputy Director Dennis Murata welcomed the audience to the presentation, sharing his own experiences of growing up as a Japanese-American in the predominantly Latino community of Boyle Heights. He spoke of learning about the various cultures around him and how they ended up becoming a part of his childhood. “There’s a lot to be learned about different cultures and that’s why we are here today,” he explained. “When we know more, we can provide better access to mental health care.”

Cross-cultural psychologist Dr. Tomas Martinez from Seaver College served as the panel moderator. The panel was made up of Benjamin Hale, Llanette Morgan and Haydeh Fakhraadi, Ph.D.

Hale is an outreach specialist with the Torres Martinez Desert Cahuilla Indian Tribe’s Temporary Assistance for Native American Families (TANF) Program. He shared Navajo rituals for adolescent females. Morgan is co-chair for the Asian/Pacific Islander Consumer Leadership Council and secretary for the Client Congress Advisory Board. She discussed the Filipino debut ceremony for teen-age girls turning 18. Lastly,

LACDMH clinical psychologist Dr. Fakhrabadi spoke of the traditional marriage rites for Iranians and their importance to the culture.

The presentation was not only about sharing information and giving insight into the different cultures of Los Angeles County, but it was also about the idea of understanding and respecting one another's cultures. "The idea of inclusion is important here," explained Dr. Martinez. "It's about the rites of passage into adulthood where there is more responsibility – and taking responsibility."

